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NIE 36-61 ADVCON

27 June 1961

*NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE*

NASSER AND THE FUTURE OF ARAB NATIONALISM

- The Nature of Arab Nationalism
- Problems and Prospects of the UAR
- Nasser and the other Arab States
- Nasser and the Afro-Asian World
- Nasser, Arab Nationalism, and the Great Powers

NOTE: This is an advance copy of the conclusions of this estimate as approved by the United States Intelligence Board. The complete text will be circulated within five days of this issuance.

**Central Intelligence Agency**

*Submitted by the*

**DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE**

*The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of this estimate: The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and The Joint Staff.*

*Concurred in by the*

**UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD**

*on 27 June 1961. Concurring were the Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State; the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army; the Assistant Chief of Naval Operations (Intelligence), Department of the Navy; the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF; the Director for Intelligence, Joint Staff; the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, Special Operations; and the Director of the National Security Agency. The Atomic Energy Commission Representative to the USIB and the Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, abstained, the subject being outside of their jurisdiction.*

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

27 June 1961

NIE 36-61: NASSER AND THE FUTURE OF ARAB NATIONALISM

THE PROBLEM

To estimate the outlook for Arab nationalism generally and to assess the problems and prospects of Nasser and the UAR in particular.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Militant nationalism will continue to be the most dynamic force in Arab political affairs, and Nasser is very likely to remain its foremost leader and symbol for the foreseeable future. The long-term outlook for the conservative and Western-aligned regimes is bleak. Despite important differences between competing brands of Arab nationalism, the significant ones all reflect desires for independence and neutralism, social and economic reform, and varying degrees of Arab unity. (Paras. 10-11, 13, 29)

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2. We do not believe that the appeal of Arab unity, strong as it is to most Arab nationalists, will overcome the host of divisive and particularist interests which work against the creation of a union of Arab states. Nasser probably now appreciates the practical obstacles involved in seeking to establish such a union. He is likely to settle for more limited means of trying to assert paramountcy. (Paras. 28, 30, 36-38)

3. The UAR will make strong efforts to achieve progress in economic development, but neither the Egyptian nor Syrian region is likely to attain significant economic growth without substantial and continued foreign aid. (Paras. 15, 20-35)

4. Nasser will probably continue to work for consolidation of unity between the Egyptian and Syrian regions through a fairly pragmatic combination of authoritarian control and tactical concessions to Syrian sensibilities. In most respects, such consolidation involves a high degree of Egyptian domination of Syria. We believe that Nasser has a good chance of avoiding a break-up of the union. However, striking successes are unlikely, and serious setbacks remain constantly possible. (Paras. 14-24)

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5. Nasser's control of the UAR -- as well as his position in the Arab world generally -- will be helped by Arab fear and hatred of Israel. Israel's nuclear potential and Israeli plans to divert Jordan waters will intensify Arab apprehensions. The UAR has the only Arab armed forces with any significant potential against Israel, which gives Nasser a unique claim to Arab leadership. (Paras. 19, 37-38)

6. This claim is further buttressed by Nasser's accepted position as the leading exponent of Arab reformism, and by his demonstrated readiness to assume leadership in defending Arab nationalism against communism. Despite his dependence on the Bloc, he is not neutral in the conflict between Arab nationalism and communism. (Paras. 10-11, 19, 46-50)

7. It is highly unlikely that Nasser will abandon his broad foreign policy of "positive neutralism." He has a basic belief that either of the great power blocs, if given free rein, would move to dominate or destroy him; he believes that neither can get free rein because of the determination of the other to prevent it. He will thus seek to avoid both total dependence on, and total

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alienation from, the Bloc as well as the West. Although in practice this strategy leads him to side more often with the Bloc than with the West, he has shown himself ready to respond vigorously to Soviet attacks. (Paras. 48-51)

8. It is probable that with the passage of time the inherent incompatibility between ultimate Soviet ambitions in the Middle East and the aspirations of Nasser and the Arab nationalists to preserve and strengthen their independent position will become increasingly manifest. If the Soviets should decide to abandon support of the Nasser regime in favor of increasingly heavy-handed pressure and subversion, the result would probably be a fundamental breach between Nasser and the USSR. However, such a breach may not come for years. (Para. 52)

9. Nasser's efforts to play a leading role among neutralists and Afro-Asians confront him with complex problems. Almost all African leaders, for example, are unwilling to see him play a dominant role on that continent. Moreover, matters like the forthcoming conference of nonaligned states and the future structure of the UN involve him in conflicting pressures from the Sino-Soviet Bloc and the neutralists. (Paras. 41-42, 45, 53)

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